



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

### Census Bureau

#### **Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for Review and Approval; Comment Request; Annual Survey of School System Finances**

**AGENCY:** Census Bureau, Commerce.

**ACTION:** Notice of Information Collection, request for comment.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Commerce, in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to comment on proposed, and continuing information collections, which helps us assess the impact of our information collection requirements and minimize the public's reporting burden. The purpose of this notice is to allow for 60 days of public comment on the proposed revision of the Annual Survey of School System Finances, prior to the submission of the information collection request (ICR) to OMB for approval.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, comments regarding this proposed information collection must be received on or before **[Insert date 60 days after date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

**ADDRESSES:** Interested persons are invited to submit written comments by email to [Thomas.J.Smith@census.gov](mailto:Thomas.J.Smith@census.gov). Please reference Annual Survey of School System Finances in the subject line of your comments. You may also submit comments, identified by Docket Number USBC-2022-0007, to the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. All comments received are part of the public record. No comments will be posted to <http://www.regulations.gov> for public viewing until after the comment period has closed. Comments will generally be posted without change. All Personally Identifiable Information (for example, name and address) voluntarily submitted by the commenter may be publicly accessible.

Do not submit Confidential Business Information or otherwise sensitive or protected information. You may submit attachments to electronic comments in Microsoft Word, Excel, or Adobe PDF file formats.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Requests for additional information or specific questions related to collection activities should be directed to Stephen Wheeler, Survey Statistician, Education Finance Branch, 301-763-9950, and [Stephen.Wheeler@census.gov](mailto:Stephen.Wheeler@census.gov).

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

*I. Abstract*

The U. S. Census Bureau plans to continue the current Office of Management and Budget clearance for the Annual Survey of School System Finances with revisions. The Annual Survey of School System Finances is the only comprehensive source of pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public elementary-secondary school system finance data collected on a nationwide scale using uniform definitions, concepts, and procedures. The collection covers the revenues, expenditures, debt, and assets of all public elementary-secondary school systems. This data collection has been cosponsored by and coordinated with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). The NCES uses this collection to satisfy its need for school finance data.

Fiscal data provided by respondents' aid data users in measuring the effectiveness of resource allocation. The products of this data collection make it possible for data users to search a single database to obtain information on such things as per pupil expenditures and the percent of state, local, and federal funding for each school system. Elementary-secondary education related spending is the single largest financial activity of state and local governments. Education finance statistics provided by the Census Bureau allow for analyses of how public elementary-secondary school systems receive their funding and how they are spending their funds.

The Annual Survey of School System Finances was revised for the fiscal year (FY) 2020 collection to include 12 new data items in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Six revenue data items and six expenditure items were added to the survey to collect financial information from school systems concerning the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. The survey was

then revised again for the FY 2021 collection in response to new legislation passed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan (ARP). Four new revenue items were added to the survey to collect financial data based on these two new legislative acts and two obsolete revenue items added in FY 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic were removed from the survey. Two new expenditure items were also added to expand the scope of financial data collected concerning COVID-19 federal assistance funds.

This proposed revision to the Annual Survey of School System Finances is to further expand the collection of expenditure data for COVID-19 federal assistance funds. The CARES Act of 2020 established several relief funds that would be made available to school systems, including the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, and the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). Subsequent legislation such as the CRRSA and the ARP further funded these sources and established additional funds made available to school systems, including the ARP Act Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. In response to these various funds being established and utilized by school systems, 21 new data items will be added to the survey to collect data on expenditures from these funding sources. Three data items collecting data for current expenditures, instructional expenditures, and capital outlay expenditures will be added for seven different sources of funds for a total of 21 new data items.

As a result of these 21 new data items being added to the survey, an increase in the total burden hours and estimated time per response for the primary survey form (F-33) is expected compared to prior survey collections. A slight decrease in the number of supplemental respondents is also expected in future collections due to school system consolidations, mergers, and other factors affecting the composition of school systems in states where supplemental debt and asset data is collected. This will partially offset some of the increase in total burden hours as a result of the 21 new items collected on the survey; however, an overall increase in total burden hours is still expected.

## *II. Method of Collection*

A letter is mailed electronically at the beginning of each survey period to solicit the assistance of the state education agencies in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This letter officially announces the opening of the data collection period and requests some administrative data, such as their estimated

date of submission, any change to the reporting format from prior year, and updated contact information for the state coordinator for the survey.

The survey form (F-33) contains item descriptions and definitions of the elementary-secondary education finance items collected jointly by the Census Bureau and NCES. It is used primarily as a worksheet and instruction guide by the state education agencies providing school finance data centrally for the school systems in their respective states. The Census Bureau collects almost all the finance data for local school systems from state education agency databases through central collection arrangements with the state education agencies. The states transfer this information in electronic format over the Internet via file transfer protocol. The Census Bureau has also facilitated central collection of school system finance data by accepting data in multiple formats.

Supplemental forms are sent to local school systems in states where the state education agency cannot centrally provide information on assets (F-33-L1), indebtedness (F-33-L2), or both (F-33-L3). School systems have the option of completing a paper form to mail back to the Census Bureau or completing the survey using an online web application.

### *III. Data*

*OMB Control Number:* 0607-0700.

*Form Number(s):* F-33, Supplemental forms: F-33-L1, F-33-L2 and F-33-L3.

*Type of Review:* Regular submission, Request for a Revision of a Currently Approved Collection.

*Affected Public:* State and local governments.

*Estimated Number of Respondents:* F-33: 51, Supplemental: 3426.

*Estimated Time Per Response:* F-33: 70 hours, 45 minutes, Supplemental: 15 minutes

*Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours:* 4465.

*Estimated Total Annual Cost to Public:* \$0. (This is not the cost of respondents' time, but the indirect costs respondents may incur for such things as purchases of specialized software or hardware needed to report, or expenditures for accounting or records maintenance services required specifically by the collection.)

*Respondent's Obligation:* Voluntary.

*Legal Authority:* Census: Title 13 U.S.C. Sections 8(b), 161, and 182. NCES: Title 20 U.S.C. Sections 9543-44.

*IV. Request for Comments*

We are soliciting public comments to permit the Department/Bureau to: (a) Evaluate whether the proposed information collection is necessary for the proper functions of the Department, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) Evaluate the accuracy of our estimate of the time and cost burden for this proposed collection, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) Evaluate ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) Minimize the reporting burden on those who are to respond, including the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments that you submit in response to this notice are a matter of public record. We will include, or summarize, each comment in our request to OMB to approve this ICR. Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Sheleen Dumas,**

*Department PRA Clearance Officer, Office of the Chief Information Officer, Commerce Department.*